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ABSTRACT

In his inaugural address as president of Indiana University, Brand emphasized the importance of higher education for nurturing of future achievement. In opening this subject he recalled the pioneers who founded the university 175 years earlier and their efforts for the future in establishing the institution. Moving on, Brand addressed the current American culture which, he argued, focuses on transient goals in retreat from social obligations to the future. He cited examples from estate planning, changes in philanthropy and volunteerism, and disinvestment in education. He then looked at historical trends in higher education arguing that the attitudes and values that have led many to turn their backs on the needs of future generations are atypical in the nation's and Indiana's history. Addressing the needs of the next generation for higher education, he described the many pressures facing current and future generations such as economic difficulties for families, technological change, and increasing global economics. He stressed the need to awaken students to humanistic and intrinsic values. In a final section on creating the future, Brand pledged to work to make Indiana University "America's New Public University." (JB)

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Myles Brand, President, Indiana University

Inaugural Address, January 19, 1995

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Myles Brand, President, Indiana University
Inaugural Address, January 19, 1995

HIGHER EDUCATION AND OBLIGATIONS TO THE FUTURE

Friends, I am humbled and honored to be here, to share with you the life of Indiana University, to share its grand traditions and the dynamic future unfolding for us. I am tremendously grateful for this moment, and for the opportunities that lie ahead. As we travel this path together, Peg and I will need your wisdom, guidance, and support. We need your help in countless ways, and we thank you from our hearts for the confidence you have already given us. In a few short months we have fallen in love with Indiana and Indiana University.

Our University owes its greatness today to 175 years of visionary leaders, from Andrew Wylie to Herman B Wells, from Elvis Stahr to John Ryan and Thomas Ehrlich. It owes its greatness to extraordinary faculty members whose brilliance has shaped our intellectual life, to energetic students who have helped to change the world, to dedicated staff and supportive friends throughout Indiana, the nation, and the world. As the newly invested sixteenth president, I inherit the successes of all these many persons.

Like earlier presidents I am a steward, entrusted for a time with ensuring Indiana University's well-being. I have the honor and the obligation to keep safe the University in all its glory and greatness. But the obligations of a president go beyond stewardship; those obligations include the nurturing of future achievement. Like all my predecessors, I have the dual responsibility of safeguarding the University's best

traditions while shaping its future. Indeed, all of us in the University community share this selfsame dual obligation to protect the great traditions and values of Indiana University and to contribute to its progress.

More broadly, all of us as members of American society have obligations to preserve the best traditions we have inherited, traditions that have made this country great. We also have equal and parallel obligations to work toward the nation's welfare in the future.

I firmly believe that higher education, to a greater extent than any other institution in our society, holds the key to America's future. American higher education is second to none in the world. We rightly take pride in that distinction. We must do everything we can to ensure that this statement will still hold true in the world our children inherit. All of us here today hold in trust the excellence of this university, and of other universities like it. We hold that excellence in trust for our descendants, the generations of the future. If we fulfill that trust well, if we meet our obligations, our children and grandchildren and their children and grandchildren will reap the benefits. Most important, they will benefit not just in their personal lives but in the contributions they will be able to make in the world of their own time.

What we do here does indeed affect the future. We have to be concerned for that future. We must care about the world our children will inherit, and so we must do our work as well as humanly possible. This obligation to the future is not merely pragmatic. It is a moral obligation, one that is rooted in our identity as social beings, as members of the human family.

Indiana University was founded 175 years ago by the pioneers of this state. In those early days bears and wolves roamed the forests, travel meant journeys on foot or horseback, and clearing a piece of land entailed many months of hand labor. Yet in the midst of these hardships, our pioneer founders nonetheless looked ahead to the world they were building for their descendants—indeed, the world they were building for us. They believed that higher education would be essential in that world, and they were right.

Investing in future generations through education was a major goal of this state from its earliest years, expressed in the 1816 constitution in these words:

> *The general assembly shall from time to time, pass such laws as shall be calculated to encourage intellectual, scientifical, and agricultural improvement, . . . and improvement of arts, sciences, commerce, manufactures, and natural history. . . .*
>
> *It shall be the duty of the general assembly, as soon as circumstances will permit, to provide by law for a general system of education, ascending in a regular gradation from township school to a state university. . . .*[1]

Indiana was the first state in the union to write a constitution that specifically mandated a system of education. We are the legatees of that vision of Indiana's pioneers. We are the beneficiaries of their commitment, and we are the inheritors of the same obligation to look ahead to the world *we* are building for *our* descendants.

1. *Obligations of Trust*

I want to take a few minutes to talk in general terms about obligation—a word that has a certain weightiness, and one that matters greatly in our lives. As individuals, we gain obligations from two sources. One source is our voluntary contracts, such as those engendered by our working life. A police officer, for example, signs on to protect the public, a teacher to impart knowledge.

But there is another set of obligations that has nothing to do with contracts. These are the obligations we have to our children, our families, our friends and colleagues, and in widening circles to our communities and society as a whole, today and for the future. There is no document, prepared by an attorney and signed by all parties, that describes our duties when we mature to adult citizenship or when we become parents. These are obligations of trust, not of contract, and their source lies in morality, in the moral imperatives that shape and preserve civilization. Parental responsibilities are the clearest illustration of the obligations of trust. Our obligations toward future generations are typical of parental roles: to nurture, to support, to provide opportunity, to leave the world no worse than we found it—and preferably better.

We are each obliged, as the Golden Rule explains, to treat all persons in ways we ourselves should like to be treated. This point was made well by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who argued that a person's actions are morally right when they are universalizable—that is, when any other person in similar circumstances should do the same. This imperative is categorical and extends not only to all our contemporaries, but also to future generations; it undergirds the mutual trust necessary for a moral society.

Translated to education, these obligations of trust mean providing the next generation with the intellectual tools they will need to achieve a high quality of life. When we use our personal resources to help our children attend college and, equally, when we appropriate public funds for higher education through our elected officials, we are acting to fulfill our obligations of trust. We are investing in the success of the next generations.

2. Disinvestment in Future Generations

It is appropriate and timely to ask searchingly about our obligations to the next generations and how well we are fulfilling them. My concern is that as we look around us today, we see the social culture of America focused too often on transient goals. Too many of us are prone, more so now than in the past, to favor today over tomorrow, to decide that for the time being our own lives and liberty, and the pursuit of our own happiness are the most important motives of action. We see, not everywhere but in many arenas, a retreat along broad fronts from our obligations to the future.

Let me give a few illustrations of this retreat. One example is the growing tendency in planning estates and wills to calculate expenditures that would bring about minimal residual assets. Out on the highways, Winnebagos go by with bumper stickers that proclaim, "I'm spending my children's inheritance." Across the country, savings rates are down, aggregate consumer debt per person has risen, and the national debt continues to climb—all indicating our willingness to mortgage the future in order to benefit the present.

Changes in philanthropy and voluntarism offer further illustrations of disinvestment in the future. A recent Gallup survey shows a decline of more than ten percent in household charitable contributions in recent years. The age spread among those who give is narrowing as giving increasingly becomes the province of older people. The percentage of households engaged in volunteer service is also in decline. I underscore that these are broad national trends, and that many, many people do remain philanthropic and do volunteer their time and talents. Indiana University in particular benefits greatly from the generosity and dedication of our alumni and friends. Their support makes possible the broad margin of excellence that defines this university. But nationally the trend in giving is spiraling downward, and we need to pay attention.

Another illustration comes from politics, in the proliferation of special interest groups and fractured social systems, particularly in urban areas. These developments, I believe, reflect a general shift of concern from the community to the individual. A rise of acrimonious sloganism and sound-bite rhetoric, aimed at promoting narrow and individualistic interests, characterizes too much public debate and highlights a declining concern for community. We must bring community back into the forefront of our lives.

Some have blamed this tendency toward self-centeredness on attitudes engendered by the 'me generation' of the 1980s. Others blame it on the insecure economic climate. Still others blame the trend on a loss of religious sentiment in many sectors of society. Whatever the causes, the results have global implications, for example in the overutilization of natural and energy resources, the depletion of American wetlands and

South American rain forests, and the worldwide overharvesting of fish, among other depredations. All these activities represent a preference for present consumption over future needs.

Parallel to these trends, we see a disinvestment in education in many parts of the country. Despite threatening surveys and reports—beginning a decade ago with *A Nation at Risk* [2]—many public schools still struggle with high student/teacher ratios, degenerating physical plant, and violence on the playground, in the hallways, and in the classroom. Of course, not all of these difficulties are a result of inadequate funding. The problem, really, is deeper. In ways both subtle and overt, many of us have made it clear that the next generation's success is not our high priority.

As a nation we are not doing well enough for our children, especially in comparison to most other developed countries: witness the increase in children born to single teenagers, the rise in the violent death rate of teens, and the jump in juvenile violent crime—three indicators of child well-being that have significantly worsened in the past decade, nationally and also here in Indiana. There are, of course, many who are working hard to rectify these problems, both in government and through the private sector. But we need a more systematic, concerted, and broad-based effort and, I maintain, a renewed ideal of our obligations to future generations.

3. *Historical Trends in Higher Education*

The attitudes and values that have led too many to turn their backs on the needs of future generations are, in fact, atypical in our nation's history, and certainly atypical here in Indiana. To offer an example from

Indiana University's history, the commitment to education, written into our state constitution, was echoed by William Lowe Bryan, president of IU in the early part of this century. Here are his words:

> *What the people need and demand is that their children have a chance—as good a chance as any other children in the world—to make the most of themselves, to rise in any and every occupation, including those which require the most thorough training. What the people want is open paths from every corner of the state, through the schools, to the highest and best things they can achieve. To make such paths, to make them open to the poorest and lead to the highest, is the mission of democracy.* [3]

Just one other IU example among many that can be cited: In the 1940s and 1950s, a time when opportunity was closed to African Americans, Indiana University was an open door for African American students from the more southern states. Herman B Wells was president then, and voiced his strong commitment that all "prejudice of color, class, and race" would be banished from the University community.[4] His determination set the tone for IU today in every area of society it touches.

In this same spirit, American universities differentiated themselves early in our history from their German and British forebears by focusing on the needs of all citizens, not just the interests of an elite. Higher education has been, and continues to be, essential to the mission of democracy in America, and public higher education, in particular, plays a crucial role. More than any other institution in America, public higher education provides the opportunity for social mobility and improvement in quality of life. The mission of public universities is to make accessible to all, based only on native ability, the opportunity to gain the knowledge and

skills necessary for a productive and successful life. While there may be few Horatio Algers, there are many, many persons who have substantially improved their life situations through opportunities gained in our public universities.

Again in this same spirit, there has been a strong sense of obligation on the part of families to make sure that the next generation would have greater access to higher education than the previous one. This sense of obligation has long roots, as Ernest Boyer and Fred Hechinger make clear in their book, *Higher Learning in the Nation's Service:*

> *Historically, Americans have had an almost touching faith in the value of education for their children. . . . [I]t was characteristic of the New World that each generation was expected to do better than its parents—not simply to follow in their footsteps as was the norm in the Old World, but to outdistance them by striking out, breaking new paths, and striving for new goals.* [5]

Where higher education is concerned, this historical and praiseworthy desire to support one's children basically remains, especially here among Hoosiers. And yet there are worrisome signs that this sense of obligation to the next generation is receding. We must ask to what extent we are still willing to make the sacrifices that enable our children and our neighbors' children to outdistance us, to break new paths, to strive for new goals.

Saving for college was long the respected norm among middle-income families, and the pride of many lower-income families. But now, for traditional-aged college students, those fresh out of high school, sufficient parental support is, in too many cases, not forthcoming. As a result, a high percentage of students must work at least part time, or

accrue large educational loans, or both. The phenomenon, decried by many, that students now take more than four years to graduate is often the result of the need to work and thus to take less than a full course load.

Add to these difficulties the rise in college costs in recent years—faster than the rate of inflation—and we have a recipe for disenfranchisement. Tuition increases have overwhelmed available scholarships and grants, and therefore educational loans have risen dramatically. Low-income students, in particular, are discouraged by the prospect of a long period of indebtedness; for that reason many choose not to go to college, or drop out before completing their degrees.

4. Education for the Next Generation

Despite rising costs, the need and the demand for higher education are growing everywhere in America. Once, a good family-wage job could be obtained with a high school education. Manufacturing and agriculture required a strong back, but not necessarily a well-trained mind. But today already, and certainly for the next generations, success in manufacturing and agriculture, not to mention professional and high-end service fields, is increasingly linked to a college education. Within the lifetime of our children, family-wage jobs in every field will depend upon education beyond high school.

Moreover, our world is being radically changed by new communications and computational technologies. If we cannot comfortably use these technologies, we are cut off from the flow of information that is fast becoming essential in virtually any career path. As management prognosticator Peter Drucker argues,[6] a new economic

order is emerging in which knowledge, not labor or raw materials or capital, is the key resource. We are rapidly becoming a society in which the knowledge worker dominates—the person who has formal education in theoretical and analytic fields and has learned to apply knowledge to new tasks.

Global economics intensifies the importance of higher education in the United States. America and Americans are not in a competitive position for low-skill manufacturing jobs. This type of production is dominated by foreign labor markets that have pay scales well below what is acceptable here. Economic success for American workers today and tomorrow calls instead for focus on value-added products and professional services.

Add to this picture the likelihood that students now graduating from our universities will change professions—not jobs, but professions—several times, and they will enter professions that do not now exist, as the computer professions did not exist only a short time ago. In these circumstances, in order to succeed, women and men will need the single most important result derived from college education—the capacity for continual learning.

Such economic advantages accruing from higher education are vital in building the opportunities of future generations. But there are other advantages also that are essential, advantages connected to humanistic and intrinsic values. The pioneer founders of Indiana understood the importance of these as well, and wrote into the constitution the need to encourage intellectual and scientific improvement and improvement of the arts.[7]

Higher education is a prime means of encouraging the intellectual and affective enjoyments that make life deeper and richer—the enjoyments derived from listening to Bach and Mozart, Aaron Copland and Philip Glass, to cite a few of my own favorites, or appreciating the paintings of Michelangelo and Cézanne, Mary Cassatt and Georgia O'Keeffe, or reading the works of Homer and Shakespeare, Virginia Woolf and Dostoyevsky, Toni Morrison and IU's own Yusef Komunyakaa. These enjoyments lift the human spirit; they empower the mind and enable the heart to soar. This is why Indiana University takes seriously the humanistic values of higher education. This is why we have state-of-the-art music halls and theatres, why we support and applaud our wonderful School of Music, why we revel in our world-class art museum and take pride in the superb artists of the visual, performing, and literary arts on our campuses.

Scientists and mathematicians, from Newton to Einstein, to Watson and Crick, have set the stage to resolve many of the mysteries of the natural world. Following in their footsteps, Indiana University scientists are engaged in uncovering the smallest particles and the most basic forces within the atom's nucleus, thus providing the knowledge necessary to harness nature; and in mapping our genetic structure, thereby giving us the tools to cure dreaded diseases. There is both intrinsic value in understanding the fundamental laws of the universe, and practical value in applying new knowledge to enhance the quality of our everyday lives.

The arts, the humanities, history, philosophy, science, and mathematics are profoundly enriching. Higher education is a gateway to them all. I recall my own vivid experience and the new world that opened for me when, as an undergraduate, I was introduced by a philosophy

professor to Plato and Aristotle, Descartes and Hume, Wittgenstein and Russell. Those heady days are still a part of my life; they remain essential to who I am, as a faculty member in philosophy and as a person.

My own experience as a student has also given me profound respect for the teacher. For it is the teacher who gives unselfishly of his or her most prized possessions: knowledge and an infectious attitude toward learning. Through the medium of teachers, we fulfill the greater part of our obligations to future generations.

By awakening students to humanistic and intrinsic values, and by educating the scientists, artists, writers, and critical thinkers who will contribute to the civilization of tomorrow, universities are repositories of the past, expositors of the present, and creators of the future. The intrinsic values of the creative arts and science are as essential as anything else to our obligations to future generations. In the words of Booth Tarkington, novelist and native of Indiana:

> *A country could be perfectly governed, immensely powerful and without poverty, yet if it produced nothing of its own in architecture, sculpture, music, painting, or in books, it would some day pass into the twilight of history, leaving only the traces of a creditable political record.* [8]

5. *Creating the Future*

The future is not fixed. It does not unfold independently of us; we are a party to creating it. If we rise to the occasion, we can shape a bright future for today's and tomorrow's young people. In building that future, whether as parents, teachers, professionals, legislators, community leaders, or community supporters, all of us are fulfilling our obligations of trust.

At great research and teaching universities such as Indiana, our obligations to the next generations are fulfilled in multifaceted ways. Those obligations are fulfilled through outstanding undergraduate education that can inspire a lifetime, through training and graduate education for future teachers, and the preparation of professionals in all walks of life. They are fulfilled through research that results in new ideas, new techniques, new products, new industries, and new opportunities for the improvement of our lives, our health, our work, our enjoyment, and our leisure. They are fulfilled through artistic and cultural activities that enrich our communities and enlarge the world in which we live.

We have the duty, and I maintain that it is a moral duty, to continue to strengthen Indiana University in the fulfillment of these obligations of trust, and to prepare the way for future generations, as Indiana's pioneer founders prepared the way for us.

Times are difficult today for institutions of higher education. I do not need to tell any of you that. In other states, some public universities are meeting fiscal pressures by becoming more like private universities, pulling away from their traditional public responsibilities. But Indiana University's future success will be best achieved by becoming, on the contrary, more public, not more private; by embracing our commitment as a public institution, enhancing our state role, renewing our partnerships with the corporate sector, and strengthening our cooperative relationships with other constituencies. Indiana University's tradition and history, its core values, and its sound position in the state all point toward this as the one right course. IU will be a national leader in

exemplifying the traditions of public higher education, reconfigured for a new age. Indiana University will become **America's New Public University.**

This vision of our dynamic future reaffirms our grand past that we celebrate on this 175th anniversary. Our task will require innovation as we build for the future. We have already begun a creative process, involving faculty and others throughout the University, to develop the most productive strategic directions in all essential areas. These critical areas relate to our campus and University-wide missions, our partnerships with the public and private sectors, our excellence in teaching and research, our need to be accountable, and our best ideas for promoting the University, increasing student persistence to graduation, enhancing minority attainment, and tightening our operational efficiency. These efforts will break new ground for the development of Indiana University as America's New Public University. Importantly, this course of action will enable Indiana University to meet squarely and fully its obligations to future generations of Hoosiers, and to all people.

I am honored and privileged to have this opportunity to play a leadership role in the history of this truly great university. I pledge to attend assiduously to our obligations to future Hoosiers. All of us together—faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends of IU—have a most serious task. It is nothing less than assuring that future generations will continue to have the extraordinary benefits of outstanding education, research, creative activity, and professional service at a grand public institution of higher learning—Indiana University.

Our task will not be easy. But building on the excellence we have inherited, we can be optimistic about what we, in turn, will be able to accomplish in fulfilling our obligations to coming generations. I look forward to sharing with you high purposes and great achievements in the years ahead as we travel this path together.

Thank you.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Thomas D. Clark, *Indiana University: Midwestern Pioneer* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), vol. 4, 3.
2. David P. Gardner et al., United States National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk,* Washington, D.C.: The Commission; Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Publications Office, 1983.
3. William Lowe Bryan, Inaugural Address, *Indiana University Bulletin,* (July 1903), vol. I, no. 2, 11. [This quotation also appears in Herman B Wells, *Being Lucky,* Indiana University Press, 1980, p. 149.]
4. Herman B Wells, "The Church at Its Best," Remarks on Layman Sunday, First Methodist Church, Bloomington, Indiana, March 5, 1944.
5. Ernest Boyer and Fred M. Hechinger, *Higher Learning in the Nation's Service* (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1981), 23.
6. Peter F. Drucker, "The Age of Social Transformation," *Atlantic Monthly,* November 1, 1994.
7. Thomas D. Clark, op. cit., 3.
8. Booth Tarkington, [search in process]